

学校编码: 10384

学号: 12020131152767

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UDC____

厦 门 大 学

硕 士 学 位 论 文

试探思辨能力与汉英交替传译的关系
——基于 BP 辩论模式训练的个案分析

A Study on the Relationship between Critical Thinking and
Consecutive Interpreting from Chinese to English
——Based on A Case Study of BP Style Debate Training

万丽瑶

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专 业 名 称: 翻译硕士英语口语译

论文提交日期: 2016 年 4 月

论文答辩时间: 2016 年 5 月

学位授予日期: 2016 年 6 月

答辩委员会主席: _____

评 阅 人: _____

2016 年 月

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Abstract

Developing students' critical thinking is arguably one of the most important objectives for higher education. In the same vein, some researchers also see critical thinking as an effective skill for conference interpreting. However, it was proven to be alarmingly missing among Chinese college students. It is urgent that Chinese college students be trained in critical thinking. In this regard, the BP style debate has captured the attention of some researchers theoretically arguing that BP training should be an effective training method.

In this thesis, the case for sharpening critical thinking as an integral part of interpreting through BP debate training is presented. Linkage between critical thinking, BP debate, and consecutive interpreting are examined. To that end, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What changes in terms of critical thinking might be seen in the participant after being trained in BP debate?
2. Will sharpened critical thinking improve the Chinese-English consecutive interpreting performance?

The methodology adopted is an experiment where a participant is intensively tutored and trained in BP debate. Before the BP debate training begins, the participant will take a pre-test of consecutive interpreting from Chinese to English, the result of which will be compared with that of an equally difficult post-test right after the training. Meanwhile, the first and last debate performances will be analyzed to see whether the subject has made any improvements in critical thinking. Results show that the subject's critical thinking skills were sharpened as a result of the training and she delivered subsequently better performance in interpreting, thus proving the significance of incorporating the element of debate into courses for interpreting students.

Key words: consecutive interpreting; critical thinking; BP debate

摘要

思辨能力被认为是高等教育需重点培养的最核心技能之一。同时，口译研究学者认为思辨能力是口译中重要的技能之一。但文秋芳教授团队通过实验证明中国大学生思辨能力的缺失较为严重，需提升大学生思辨能力。英国议会制辩论形式因其对语言，公共演讲及思辨能力的高要求而备受学者关注，目前有大量文献从理论上论证英国议会制辩论有助于培养大学生的思辨意识，但没有实证操作证明其效果。

因此，本文有两个研究问题：

(1) 英国议会制辩论训练能否提高学生的思辨能力？

(2) 思辨能力的提高是否有助于改善汉英交传表现？

本文综述前人关于口译与思辨、思辨与 BP 辩论关系的研究，以个案分析为研究方法，通过对一位口译学生进行 BP 辩论培训和辅导，观察其在思辨上的变化，回答第一个研究问题。在培训前后，分别对该生进行一次难度相似的汉英交传测试，通过对比前后测的结果回答第二个研究问题。研究发现，被测者思辨能力有较大的提高，同时其汉英交传的信息忠实度大大提高，口译输出更为流畅。

本文的意义在于证明了通过英国议会制辩论提高思辨能力有助于提升汉英交传。未来口译培训课程设置可考虑增设辩论课程，提高学生思辨能力，从而提升口译表现。

关键词：汉英交传；思辨能力；英国议会制辩论

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Facione (1990) pointed out that critical thinking is considered as one of the crucial skills in the west. It is also believed to be related to interpreting yet regrettably missing among Chinese students (Wen Qiufang, 2008). BP debate is a commonly used style for debate in the west and is increasingly popular in China. The FLTRP Cup National English Debate Contest adopts BP style debate for its more than 10,000 participants. Theoretically it was proven to be an effective approach to make one a better critical thinker. This thesis aims to find out if improved critical thinking through BP debate would improve the performance in consecutive interpreting from Chinese to English.

In this chapter, the reason why this topic is chosen, the methodology and the structure of the thesis will be explained.

1.1 Motivation

Critical thinking has been considered missing among English majors (Huang Yuansheng, 1998; Wen Qiufang, 2009). Meanwhile, critical thinking is important to interpreting (Liu Heping, 2001; Bao Gang, 2005). Therefore, it is important to train interpreting students in critical thinking. In this part, the fact that critical thinking is lacking among Chinese college students is pointed out and the reason is explained.

Gao Yihong (1993) believed that some language activities for English majors, such as public speaking, translation and debate entail high-level intelligence and they can be seen as processes of creating or recreating, thus also known as creative activities. The ability to perform the above-mentioned activities comprises three parts, linguistic competence, pragmatic competence and critical thinking. She explained that critical thinking is the weakest link for Chinese English learners. Huang Yuanshen (1998) pointed out the absence of critical thinking among English majors who are outperformed by students in other liberal arts majors. He warned in 2010 again that

English majors are only trained in their language skills with alarmingly little attention being paid to critical thinking, creativity, and cultural awareness, and he called for a reform of the courses to include critical thinking training. It seems to be agreed that English majors are much less proficient in critical thinking than other liberal arts majors. Sun Min (2014) has been an instructor and adjudicator for national English speaking contest since 2008 and noticed that public speaking is mistakenly believed to be about pronunciation, looks, and big words when it should be about the depth of an idea, and the development of valid argumentation.

The situation alarmed some researchers, pushing them to find out by means of experiment if English majors do perform worse than students in other majors. Wen Qiufang (2009) proved that English majors in fact are not worse in critical thinking tests than other liberal arts majors and even better than science majors in her experiments in 2008 and 2009. Floyd (2011) proved through her empirical experiments that critical thinking performance is more difficult in a second language. However, Wen Qiufang (2012) admitted the experiments did suggest that the critical thinking overall is missing among Chinese college students and that English majors make poor arguments and are very ambiguous and unclear in understanding and expressing ideas.

There are a few reasons for that. He Qixing (1999) pointed out that low-level cognitive strategies such as rote-based memorization take overwhelming predominance over high-level cognitive ones such as critical thinking and creativity in English majors courses. Bao Gang (2005) pointed out that the current training for an interpreting learner was regrettably the same as one for a second language learner, failing to understand what it takes to be an interpreter. It requires a lot more to learn to become an interpreter than to learn English. Although China has done a fairly good job in training a second language learner, it still lags behind in professional training for the interpreter.

It is essential that interpreting learners be better trained in critical thinking. Chen Jing (2002) classified the communicative competence of interpreters into knowledge competence, skill competence and psychology competence. Note-taking and public

speaking should be given priorities in training as the two main skills in skill competence. Sun Youzhong (2011) emphasized that in order to improve the competitive edge of the English majors in the job market, the English departments ought to carry out an all-round critical-thinking-oriented reform in educational objectives, curriculum, teaching methods, assessment, teaching materials design and teacher development.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to find out if improved critical thinking through BP debate training can enhance the consecutive interpreting performance. The reason why BP debate is chosen as the method for the training will be explained in Chapter 2.

1.2 Significance and Methodology of the Study

Some researchers argue that sharpened critical thinking can improve one's interpreting.

Zhang Peng (2011) explained that the way BP style debate is done can make students a better critical listener, a better speaker in a clear and logic way, a more knowledgeable person with heightened skills in memory and in handling high pressure. All these qualities are also what we hope can be found in an interpreter. She concluded that BP debate should be incorporated into courses for master students in interpreting.

However, there is no empirical research to date to support that claim. In the present study, efforts are made to prove through a case study that BP debate is effective to make one a critical thinker and consequently a better interpreter.

The research questions of the study are:

1. What changes in terms of critical thinking might be seen in the participant after being trained in BP debate?
2. Will sharpened critical thinking improve the Chinese-English consecutive interpreting performance?

To answer these questions, the study has adopted a methodology that combines

theoretical analysis with empirical research. This study will conduct a case study on one participant, an interpreting student in her first year with no experience in debate, who will be closely examined in the changes of critical thinking and subsequently changes in her interpreting performance. To evaluate the changes in the critical thinking, the first of the 8 rounds of debate and the last one will be transcribed, analyzed and compared with each other. In term of the change in her consecutive interpreting from Chinese to English, there will be two tests, one before the training and one after it is finished. Before the intensive training begins, the subject is given manual, books and videos to acquire some knowledge of BP.

Therefore, the significance of the study is in two folds. First, the relationship between BP debate and critical thinking is sorted out for the first time. Second, if it is proven to be effective to train interpreting students through BP debate in their critical thinking, the courses of debate is recommended to be incorporated as a part of the training effort for interpreting students.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five parts. In the first chapter, the motivation, the significance and methodology is introduced. The goal of this thesis is to prove whether the training in critical thinking will enhance consecutive interpreting from Chinese to English. The training model chosen is BP debate. If it is proven effective, courses of BP debate should be included in the curriculum for interpreting students. In Chapter 2, the relationship between BP debate and critical thinking is examined. BP debate training is an effective way to enhance critical thinking. The basic rules of BP debate are introduced. A review of relevant research is given. In the third chapter, the relationship between critical thinking and interpreting is presented. It is argued that critical thinking can contribute to interpreting quality. The issue of interpreting quality measurement is explained. Chapter 4 introduces the case study in terms of its participant, material, procedure and measurement. Chapter 5 discusses the results of the experiments. There are two sets of results. One is for the critical thinking. In

addition to a score, the debate will also be analyzed under the framework developed by Wen Qiufang (2009). The other is for the interpreting performance to see if any change has occurred in the faithfulness of information and fluency of the speech. The conclusion will be made in the last chapter.

Chapter 2 BP Debate and Critical Thinking

2.1 BP Debate

British Parliamentary (BP) Style Debate is the most commonly used format for competitive debate. There are four two-person teams involved in a BP round. The four groups are divided into two sides, with two groups supporting the motion (Proposition) and the other two opposing it (Opposition).

What they debate against each other is called motion, which usually starts with “THBT” (This house believes that) or “THW” (This House would). For instance, “THBT national resources should be equally distributed among all states.” Most of the motions commonly seen are policy-based. Because the style originated from British parliamentary procedure, the two sides are called the Government Side and Opposition Side. The 8 speakers are similarly titled:

1. Opening Government (first faction):
 1. Prime Minister
 2. Deputy Prime Minister
2. Opening Opposition (second faction):
 1. Leader of the Opposition
 2. Deputy Leader of the Opposition
3. Closing Government (third faction):
 1. Member for the Government
 2. Government Whip
4. Closing Opposition (fourth faction):
 1. Member for the Opposition
 2. Opposition Whip

Even though there are two teams of government or opposition, it does not mean they are on the same side, technically they are for the motion, but they still could not see each other's arguments and they are competing against each other.

The motion is announced only 15 minutes before the debate begins. The teams are forbidden to talk to one another. It is the time to get ready for the 7-minute-long speech, which might be interrupted by a point of information from the opposing side. Point of information, or POI, is a question from the opposite side during the speech. The first and last minute of each speech is considered "protected time", during which no POI is allowed. There sometimes might be more than one POIs which, once taken, must be explained in the speech. One can choose to accept it and explain or ignore it because it will take up the barely enough time they have to defend the case. It is advisable to take at least one POI, an effective way to be engaged with the opposite side. The group will be randomly assigned to different roles.

In the contest, debaters win as a team. English as a foreign language for Chinese students is an important tool but is by no means the standard against which players are judged. The evaluation criteria are: matter, method, and manner. To be specific, first, it is about the content, the validity, depth, clarity and logic of the arguments, rebuttal, and the engagement. Second, it depends on the strategy in debate, teamwork with the partner, timing and the POI. Third, it is about the public speaking skills in terms of manner and clarity of the language, the wording and the way a debater paces his/her speech.

2.2 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is considered one of the most important goals of modern education. (Facione 1990; 文秋芳 2012) In this part the definition of critical thinking, the theoretical models and the measurement developed for it will be examined. The model and measurement built by Wen Qiufang (2009) will be employed in this thesis.

2.2.1 The Definition of Critical Thinking

Facione (1998) emphasized that critical thinking is a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in one's personal and civic life. While not synonymous with good thinking, critical thinking is a "pervasive and self-rectifying human

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